

ASHES AND SPARKS

PHILOSOPHICAL PAPERS

D. R. Khashaba

2020

**Be thou, Spirit fierce,
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!
Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!
And, by the incantation of this verse,
Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!**
Shelley, Ode to the West Wind

PREFACE

In the course of less than a year I compiled and uploaded three volumes of collected papers, every time under duress from various sources and various causes. For a while I thought of combining the last two collections with the addition of the papers written subsequently. I shrank; the task looked forbidding. I then decided to collect the latest papers, leaving the collection open for any eventual additions and withholding the uploading for the time being. – I now think there is no point in delaying any further. For one thing, my eyesight has almost completely gone. It is time for me to take it easy.

Since I published my first book, *Let Us Philosophize*, in 1998 when I had already passed seventy, I have been advocating a two-winged philosophy: (a)

propounding an unorthodox understanding of the nature of philosophical thinking; (b) expounding an imaginative metaphysical vision for which I claim no more and no less than I claim for all genuine metaphysics, namely, the presentation of creative imaginative visions that lend intelligibility, meaning, and value to our otherwise dumb experiential interaction with the natural world.

While every one of the papers here collected stands by itself, taken together the papers give a reasonable summation of the philosophy indicated in the lines above.

D. R. Khashaba

September 3, 2020

My ninety-third birthday

Revised: September 17, 2020

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THE SOUL DIVINE

A metaphysical vision is an allegorical representation of mystic experience wherein the Soul “Beholds itself and knows itself divine” (Shelley, *Hymn of Apollo*).

How do we know that the soul is divine? The question is misconceived. It is the soul itself that is the fount and model of the divine. Its spirituality transcends all corporeality; its reality transcends all existentiality; its spontaneity transcends all effectuality; its creativity transcends all causality; its eternity transcends all temporality; and that is the Divine: spiritual, real, spontaneous, creative, eternal.

Where do we find such divinity? In the simplest act of loving kindness; in the outburst of joy in song; in the pang of grief; in the creations of genuine poetry and genuine art and genuine thought. These defy all

rationalistic derivations and analyses, all empiricist reductionism; and all of this is beyond all AI sophistications until the machine can, unprompted, pronounce, “ I am I’, and then it would no longer be a machine but a creation of the ultimate creative Power, Creative Eternity.

At our best we are free creators. Alas! The best of us are only that in rare fugitive moments. If we were wise that would be the ideal we would aspire to and that would be the one and only goof we crave.

D. R. Khashaba

May 19, 2020

SPIRIT OF BEAUTY

I know no other poem or other work of genius that so fully and so profoundly gives expression to the metaphysical Ultimate as does Shelley's *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*. Here we have the clearest expression of the Vision of Absolute Beauty crowning the lover's ascent depicted in the *Symposium*. For a number of days I have been fighting the temptation to say something about this gem of truly divine inspiration. In what follows I give thoughts that run in my mind parallel to Shelley's words, not to comment or interpret Shelley's words but to clarify and exemplify what I have been trying to put through about the metaphysical Ultimate.

Shelley speaks of the "awful shadow of some unseen Power" that

"visits with inconstant glance

Each human heart and countenance”.

The sense of that ‘unseen Power’ is indeed the beginning and source of all philosophy and all religion. I believe that every new-born babe comes to life endowed with that magic wonder. Alas! It is buried under junk and rubbish in almost all of us.

Shelley speaks of the “shadow of some unseen Power” and further on addresses it as “Spirit of Beauty”. This is significant, for ultimate Reality is not a something, not an entity, not even a form. It is Power and, as Power, is pure act. Hence it is Spirit, it is the spiritual order of Being, it is our being on the spiritual plane of Being. For the nature of Spirit is not to be but to be ever creatively active, to be a pure act of creation.

**“Spirit of Beauty, that dost consecrate
With thine own hues all thou dost shine upon
Of human thought or form”**

This is the true and full meaning of philosophical Idealism. It is the Vision of Reality as Power – power that we find in our inner reality and that is one with our inner reality – that sheds meaningfulness and intelligibility on all things. This is what Plato sought to put through in prophetic myth after myth.

After the exuberant opening verses, comes the poignant: “-- where art thou gone?”

It is not part of my plan to dwell on Shelley’s grieved lament on the necessary imperfections and evils of the actual world that

**“Cast on the daylight of this earth
Such gloom”.**

Shelley continues:

**“No voice from some sublimer world hath ever
To sage or poet these responses given”.**

Indeed, all our hopes for an answer from beyond are doomed to be frustrated. Only the mystic vision of metaphysical Reality can lend our life meaning and value.

**“Thy light alone ...
“Gives grace and truth to life's unquiet dream.”**

I must pass by Shelley’s frightfully moving account of his boyhood experiences and aspirations, but must quote this:

**“When musing deeply on the lot
Of life, at that sweet time when winds are wooing
All vital things that wake to bring
News of birds and blossoming, --
Sudden, thy shadow fell on me;
I shrieked, and clasped my hands in ecstasy!
I vowed that I would dedicate my powers
To thee and thine -- have I not kept the vow?”**

To atone for the blasphemy of my having thus distorted Shelley’s sacred text, let me quote the closing verses:

**“Thus let thy power, which like the truth
Of nature on my passive youth
Descended, to my onward life supply
Its calm -- to one who worships thee,
And every form containing thee,
Whom, Spirit fair, thy spells did bind
To fear himself, and love all human kind.”**

Can I ever be forgiven my outrageous deed? My only solace is that, hopefully, it may lead the Reader to go to Shelley’s *Hymn*, which, fortunately, is readily accessible online.

**D. R. Khashaba
August 1, 2020**

HUMANISM

This is a passing thought, no more.

It is only due to historical chance that we restrict the term ‘humanism’ to a modern intellectual movement. In truth any autonomous morality or moral outlook as opposed to a heteronomous morality resting on the command or satisfaction of a higher being, is a humanism.

Put simply: humanism is the view that human life itself and in itself is the end, value, and purpose of human life. This being a broad general outlook, it is naturally manifested in various shapes under various circumstances.

Socrates’ outlook was decidedly humanistic. He found the end, value, and purpose of human life in the full unhampered realization of essential human nature. This he signified as the health of one’s soul. The

duty, if it may be called duty, of anyone is to care for the wellbeing of one's soul. That is why he found it axiomatic that one who knows what is good will do what is good. This is what the learned call 'Socrates' intellectualism' and find it puzzling.

The original, pure, uncorrupted teaching of Gautama the Buddha is humanistic, He gave up pomp and luxury to live a simple, pure, human life.

Stoicism was essentially a humanism, but a humanism fitted to a world falling apart. Thus while Socrates had no use for asceticism, Marcus Aurelius had no room even for simple healthy enjoyments.

These are simple thoughts that could be developed endlessly.

D. R. Khashaba

August 4, 2-20

FOLLY OF THE WISE

As I see it, humankind is in grave danger. I simply cannot understand how it is that it is not obvious to everybody that humanity is rapidly drifting towards final catastrophe.

This has not come about for want of wise minds that saw and spoke and warned. In the past hundred years there have been tens of women and men of goodwill and clear vision who saw and spoke. Regrettably, all of them clothed their vision in a theory and a plan of action. Then most of those wise persons busied themselves in showing the errors, faults, and defects in the rival theories and plans.

There has never been and there can never be a social or political theory or plan that is not erroneous, defective, faulty. That is necessarily so because human reality, social reality, political reality is not and can never be a definite actuality. It is always a nebula in ferment. Any theoretical representation of such reality

must be an imaginative fictional delineation of an individual perspective. The internal arguments and controversies of the wise and the learned are of no practical consequence. Rulers sunk in their own stupid wisdom do not heed them and they cannot reach the common folk who need them.

To save humanity we need to enlighten the majority of common women and men. The wise, to enlighten people, should be prophets, poets, dreamers, proclaiming their insights in parable and myth. The most precious gifts Plato has given us are his myths. Nietzsche has moved and enlivened more hearts and minds than all the Rationalists and Empiricists put together. The wise should infuse into individuals true values and dreams. This is a task not only for philosophers in the narrower acceptance of the term but for philosophic poets, novelists, artists, film makers.

To save humanity we need to educate humankind, to disseminate a spiritual culture. Do we have the time?

I confess that, apart from a warning cry now and then, I have done very little in this respect. Most of the time I have been fighting against a misunderstanding

of the nature of philosophical thinking, a misunderstanding that depleted philosophy of relevance to human life and the values of human life.

D. R. Khashaba

August 6, 2020

CURSE OF CIVILIZATION

When humans took their first steps towards civilization, they took their first steps towards alienating themselves from humanity.

I am sad that I must end my life a prophet of doom but I cannot blind myself to the clear signs that humankind is rapidly drifting towards final catastrophe.

The evil is inherent in the world system – the industrial system, the economic system, the social system, which form a unified interpenetrating complex. No piecemeal reform will avail.

We need a totally new world system arising from a spiritual rebirth of humankind. This is what was preached by ancient sages, by Socrates, by Jesus, by the Buddha, by Nietzsche, but their teaching evaporated in the dense universal stupidity.

There is no hope in present world leaders: they are part and parcel of the evil complex. If we had the time, the alternative would have been in a gradual but not tardy strengthening of world bodies such as the UN specialized organizations and agencies to the point of creating a true world government making the whole of humankind into one true family. Instead, the leaders of the most powerful countries are cramping and undermining the existent world bodies.

If it were not too bizarre, one could fancy that a global conflagration might leave scattered small families leading a simple life in the bosom of nature. To escape the evils of civilization, the cultural gains of humanity would be sacrificed.

To end on a personal, egotistic note, I find sad comfort in the belief that I will not live to see the worse coming to the worst.

P.S.: What about the contributions of science? NASA tells us there is water on Mars. One day we may be able to grow there wheat and corn and potatoes, but instead of using these to feed the millions dying of famine in Africa, Americans will consume them to free spaces of their arable lands to build factories to make

tanks and missiles and submarines, if not to use them against China and Russia, then to sell to the Saudis for killing Yemeni children.

D. R. Khashaba

August 8, 2020

PHILOSOPHY AS DIALECTICS OF CULTURE

In my writings, to combat a misconception of the nature of philosophy (a misconception shared by both dogmatic metaphysics and empiricism equally), I usually narrowed philosophy to the creative imaginative intimation of mystic experience in myth, allegory, and parable. In this paper I will try to correct the error involved in the narrowed approach which emphasizes the fundamental metaphysical aspect of philosophy at the cost of shadowing the equally fundamental critical aspect.

My narrowing of the conception of philosophy came from concentrating on Plato's metaphysical insight. Correcting the misleading narrowness means going back to the original core Socratic insight.

For Socrates the one and only absolutely valuable thing, the one and only thing good in itself, is the innermost core of our being, which we may call our soul. In the complications and tribulations of practical living within an imperfect world, our vision of our inner reality, our inner good, gets obscured and confused. The end and purpose of the Socratic examination of oneself and of others is to remove the confusions and clear the obscurities to have insight into our inner reality and inner good. That is the whole of Socrates' moral philosophy.

This Socratic insight has a more extensive application. In our dealings with the natural world we encounter puzzles, we encounter mysteries. Our intelligence constrains us to think. From a primitive human being's puzzlement about rain and fire to Newton's puzzlement about planets orbiting the sun, to NASA's puzzlement about black holes and expanding galaxies, it's the same thing. I have to ask the Reader's forbearance for I have to be cryptic.

We think, we err, we stray, we retrace our steps. To think is to theorize; to theorize, to theorize is to fictionalize. In brief, all theorization is fictionalization:

all theory is fiction. Hawking said as much in explaining the nature of scientific theory. (*A Brief History of Time*.) In philosophical thinking we redeem the fictionality of theory. (A very good example is Whitehead's baring of the Fallacy of Misplaced Concreteness.)

Even at the level of perception, the mind (imagination) works the sensuous input into the fiction of an object.

Philosophy as the dialectic dismantling of the fictional foundation of all theory (in all spheres and on all levels) is an ongoing process, a lifetime occupation. That is philosophy in the more common acceptation and that is the philosophical life as Plato preached it in the *Phaedo*. (See *In Praise of Philosophical Ignorance*, 2016.)

Empirical science understands reality as object; Aristotle understood reality as substance: this is lifeless reality. That is the abstractionism that Bergson and Whitehead combatted. Whitehead, agreeing with Plato's view that all that is real in any sense is no other thing than *dunamis* (activity) (*Sophist*) maintains that reality is process: it is not phenome-

nal process; it is life, living reality, it is intelligent creativity.

Berdyaev's philosophy of spirit stops short of its rational completion. The monotheism fundamental to his Christianity makes him relegate the creativity of reality to the transcendent deity. This despoils spirituality of its essence, for spirituality is nothing if not the quintessence of the intelligent moral agent.

I have rambled far from my initial purpose of correcting the imbalance of restricting the term philosophy to metaphysical philosophy. Philosophy as the ongoing dialectical scrutiny of our thought and our cultural heritage is the ground and condition of the examined life that Socrates assures us is alone a life for a human being.

D. R. Khashaba

August 10, 2020

PARADOX OF PLATO'S *REPUBLIC*

The least injurious reading of Plato's *Republic* is one that takes the ideal city as a mere maquette to help in the search for the essence of justice. As a plan for an ideal state it is flawed from beginning to end. In Book I we are repeatedly told that what we are really after is to find out what manner of life is best for a human being. The whole drift of the *Republic* is to show the philosophic life as the best – indeed the only proper – life for a human being. But in the *Republic* ideal state only a small group attains and enjoys the philosophic life. Well and good if that is all that is humanly possible. But in the Socratic discourses we had found that the only worthwhile thing that a good and wise king can do for the citizens is to make them good and wise, which he cannot do in his capacity as king or ruler. That is the dilemma of the political problem. A good

ruler can feed and pamper the citizens but only a good sane society can bring up its members to be good and capable or worthy of being happy. Goodness cannot be infused from outside or from above.

That dilemma is very much with us still. Herbert Marcuse in the Introduction to his insightful “Essay on Liberation” perceptively diagnoses the condition of our ailing civilization. Let me extract the following sentences:

“At this stage, the question is no longer: how can the individual satisfy his own needs without hurting others, but rather: how can he satisfy his needs without hurting himself, without reproducing, through his aspirations and satisfactions, his dependence on an exploitative apparatus which, in satisfying his needs, perpetuates his servitude?”

“For the world of human freedom cannot be built by the established societies, no matter how much they may streamline and rationalize their domination. Their class structure, and the perfected controls required to sustain it, generate needs, satisfactions, and values which reproduce the servitude of the human existence.”

Like all who aspire for a better world, Marcuse dreams of a revolt or revolution to bring about the liberation of humans from the shackles of the extant world order. The problem as I see it is that the necessary liberation can only happen within and come from within individuals. But that can only take place on a large scale within a sane society. Else all the evils we are trying to escape will re-emerge. That is how all revolutions and all reforms have stumbled.

In the eighteenth century, at the height of the Enlightenment, Kant said we are living in an age of enlightenment but not in an enlightened age. More than two centuries later we are in a worse state than when Kant made that statement.

D. R. Khashaba

August 11, 2020

PARADOX OF SUFFICIENT REASON

The notion of Sufficient Reason is the foulest falsehood in philosophical thinking.

To speak of a reason for absolute being, being as such, is a paradox. That is the root and prime instance of the fallacy of infinite regress.

To speak of a reason for any finite particular being is a subterfuge for concealing the causal puzzle.

The notion of cause is a conceptual fiction to lend spurious intelligibility to the riddle of becoming.

Hume debunked the fiction of causation and Kant showed it is a cover spread by the conceptual faculty (named the understanding by Kant) to connect two distinct events.

In truth no distinct object causes or produces an object other than itself.

Becoming remains totally unintelligible until we see it as the ultimate mystery of creativity.

No being causes another being but every event creatively gives birth to another creative event.

We see this clearly – if we are willing to believe our awareness of immediate evidence rather than our conceptual fictions – in the simplest of our spontaneous activities.

In thinking, thought gives birth to new thought. No mechanical wizardry or neuroscientific sophistication can account for a mother's smile or a lover's kiss.

Life has no reason and no purpose beyond life. A bird's singing, a gazelle's cavorting, a babe's giggling, is the spontaneous outflow of vitality.

Spontaneous deeds of love and creative works of beauty are the outflow of the intelligent creativity of pure humanity, on the spiritual plane of being.

We drudge and toil and hate and strive because we encumber our humanity with false aims and illusory values.

Humanity has no reason and no purpose extraneous to humanity. Religious teachers adulterate human purity with their heaven no less than with their hell and the learned adulterate reason and understanding with their principles and logics and deductions and demonstrations.

D. R. Khashaba

August 13, 2020

PHILOSOPHY MUSIC POETRY

Every student of philosophy knows that in the *Phaedo*, when Socrates is asked for what motivated him to versify some of Aesop's fables, he explains that he had for some time been having a dream admonishing him to 'make music'; that previously he took this to confirm him in practicing philosophy, philosophy being the greatest music; when confined to prison he thought it best to adhere to the letter of the admonition. So what does he do? He has recourse to the fables of Aesop and versifies some of them. We are liable to wonder: what a medley! Philosophy, music, poetry, fables, how are these connected or rather identified? The companions of Socrates did not wonder; to them it was understandable since to them the notion of music was not narrow but meant culture, intelligent life.

If for a while we free ourselves from the conceptual constraints of common speech we can discern a pregnant analogy running through all four notions: philosophy, music, poetry, fable.

The case of music is most enlightening. Only a person completely lacking in the sense of music will ask of a piece of music: What does it mean? A piece of music is its own meaning, its own purpose, its own end. It is as absurd to ask about the meaning of a piece of music as to ask about the meaning of a rose. A piece of music engenders in us a state of being, a state of awareness, self-luminous, having no and needing no extraneous reference. It is a whole, an intelligible whole, a living whole.

Music is the ideal of all art because of all arts it comes nearest to being absolutely pure form without matter, the nearest approach to the soul, to metaphysical reality.

While philosophy and poetry fall short of the purity of music they come nearest to their ideal state when they are most true to the analogy of music. Philosophy is best when, like music, it engenders within us a state of being, whole in itself, intelligible in itself. Philoso-

phy, like poetry, shapes our dreams, our hopes, our sorrows, our puzzlements, into wholes, into visions, meaningful in themselves, intelligible in their own luminosity. Philosophy comes best clothed in myth.

The truth of philosophy, equally with the truth of poetry, equally with the truth of all art, is purely aesthetic as Keats truly prophesied in saying: Beauty is truth, truth beauty.

Philosophy has nothing to do with the actual, the factual, the demonstrable, the observable, the verifiable. Spinoza's laboured 'geometrical demonstrations' only obscure his moral and metaphysical insights that we may only with difficulty glimpse between the lines. Philosophy that claims to speak the truth about the objective world is unrelated to philosophy and is only the mockery of science.

D. R. Khashaba

August 14, 2020

KANT AND IDEALISM

I find it incredible that Kant continues to be misunderstood and misrepresented. In *A History of Modern Europe*, Chapter 9, under “German Idealism”, Professor John Merriman writes:

“The basic tenet of German idealism was that we perceive and understand the world through the medium of our ideas, and not through the direct application of our senses. Kant was the foremost proponent of this school. ... Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) affirmed that rational inquiry into nature leads to knowledge. ... But for Kant, reason alone was not the basis for our knowledge of the world. Instead, each person understands the world through concepts that cannot be separated from his or her unique experience. This philosophy undermined faith in the rational objectivity and universalism that had characterized the high Enlightenment.”

I find this confusing, not to say misleading. I have no idea what might be meant by the statement that “each person understands the world through concepts that cannot be separated from his or her unique experience.”

Kant for a time acquiesced in and taught the dogmatic metaphysics of Leibniz and others until Hume’s scepticism made him re-think his position. I venture to give below an account that, though not couched in Kantian phraseology, I believe to give the gist of Kant’s critical system.

All that we know of the natural world comes to us through the senses. Plato, Locke, Hume, Kant are all at one in this. I see a green patch. Hume (improving on Locke’s terminology) calls that an impression. I may have the impression a thousand times but still the impression each time is just that particular impression until something flashes in my mind and I say, “That’s a leaf.” Only then it becomes an objective thing to me and I can connect it with the tree or with the yellow withered thing on the ground that does not at all look like the green leaf. Only then can I connect things in a system and have knowledge of the natural world. The something that flashes in the mind and without which there can be no objective knowledge, that flashing

something Plato calls an idea (form) and Kant calls a concept of the understanding. Both Plato and Kant say it comes from the mind. This knowledge is not rational knowledge in the sense intended by the Rationalists nor is it empirical knowledge bred by experience as thought by the Empiricists. It is the infusion of meaning by the mind into the dumb deliverance of sensuous experience. To modify Kant's famous dictum: reason without experience is empty; experience without reason is blind.

In brief, Kant finds that all knowledge of the natural world relates to and rests on phenomenal presentations received through sensation, clothed in concepts of the understanding, by means of which our mute and dull impressions are transformed into scientific empirical knowledge. Though empirical science at the time of Plato was rudimentary, still in the 'divided line' (*Republic* VI) Plato placed such empirical knowledge next below the highest knowledge of pure principles.

Among the concepts of the understanding (beside the concepts of leaf and stone and deer) we have ideas of number, of a point, of a line, of magnitude, of circularity, of equality, which are not objects in the phenomenal world. Yet, strangely, we find that we can 'lay them over' the things of the natural world and obtain results. In other words, we find analogies for them

in the things of the world. This is the secret of mathematics. The Earth's orbit round the sun is not perfectly uniform; it necessarily changes if only because the sun is constantly changing. But by assuming the orbit is uniform we can make practically useful calculations. But I will not go any further into that here.

Kant may not very much like the way I have put the above but still I believe he would admit that it agrees with his thinking. In what follows I admittedly go beyond Kant.

Further, there are pure ideas of another kind, ideas of duty, of freedom, of soul, and of the Whole. If mathematical ideas have no direct or immediate connection with the natural world and yet can be applied to the natural world, these other ideas, which I may call metaphysical ideas, have absolutely neither connection nor affinity to the natural world. But just as we found the mathematical ideas can be worked into rational systems for which we can find useful applications in the natural world, we here find that we can work these pure ideas into intelligible systems that are self-contained and totally unrelated to the natural world. These are metaphysical visions that give us aesthetic satisfaction, that give us a spiritual experience valuable in itself. These are akin to the imaginative

creations of poetry and art, meaningful in themselves but without any extraneous reference.

With regard to these metaphysical ideas Kant's position is anomalous. His transcendental system asserts that these pure 'Ideas of Reason' do not relate to the objective world, but, unable to discard his religious beliefs, he convinces himself and tries to convince us, that these ideas somehow prove the immortality of the soul and the existence of God. Only those who come to Kant already believing in immortality and the existence of God can find him convincing.

**D. R. Khashaba
August 16, 2020**

PLATO MISLEADS HIMSELF

Plato's most grievous misadventure is his doctrine of *mimēsis* (imitation) which bred the most absurd theory of art, led to an unjust and unreasonable onslaught on poets and artists, and distorted the most precious contribution Plato had made to philosophical thinking: for the absurd theory of *mimēsis* resulted from a misapplication of the Socratic principle of intelligible Ideas as developed in the Platonic principle of Forms.

Socrates introduced the pregnant distinction between intelligible ideas and perceptible objects in the moral sphere which Plato extended to all things universally. This seems to be suggested by the episode in the first part of the *Parmenides* where Socrates enthusiastically affirms there are ideas of justice, courage, etc.; hesitantly admits there may be ideas of man,

horse, etc., but emphatically rejects the possibility of there being ideas of hair, mud, dirt. Plato, we may assume, saw that if it is the idea of justice that enables us to see the justice in a just act or person, it is likewise the idea that endows any particular entity with a specific character. Thus in the seminal ‘autobiographical’ passage in the *Phaedo* (95e-101e) it is the idea of ‘growth’ that confers integrity and intelligibility on the successive disparate stages of a growing object.

Plato (principally in the *Phaedo*) in emphasizing the stability and constancy of the ideas over-emphasized the mutability and fugitiveness of perceptible objects. He also emphasized that no perceptible object exactly matches the idea that confers on the object its specific character. This is a true observation that hides the seed of a grave error. For it is wrong to see the mutability and fugitiveness of particular objects as an imperfection (an error shared by all Absolute Idealisms). It is in the nature of particular objects to differ, to change, to vanish, since Reality is not static but creative. Nature does not tolerate iron-clad repetitiveness. Every event (in Whitehead’s sense of the term) is unique and is transient. The necessary failure of objects to match ideas is not an imperfection in the

objects but a necessary insufficiency in the ideas. The idea in conferring specificity cannot have, must not have, perfect specificity. The more specific an idea is the narrower its scope is. All the paeans Plato sings for the immutability and permanence of the ideas is sheer poetry, spiritually inspiring but factually incorrect. That is why, in the *Sophist* Plato chides the ‘Friends of the Forms’ for bereaving the real of life, intelligence, and activity. He insists that what is real in any sense can be no other thing than activity (*dunamis*).

The preceding long paragraph is a digression. We come to where Plato was misled and tripped into his regrettable error. Having spoken of the intelligible and the perceptible as two things, he sought to give the relatedness of the two conceptual expression. This is the trap that language and conceptual thinking always hold for us. The duality of the idea and the object is a mirage. The object apart from the idea is for us nothing. It is the idea that makes the object be what it is for us. The cloud sailing in the sky is for an ass, for a dog, for a human that has just emerged into being, a ghostly shadow. It is the idea that makes it a cloud, bringer of rain and of fire.

Plato sought to express the relation between the idea and the object. He tried several alternatives: sharing, participating, copying, mimicking. He settled on no particular expression, insisted on none. In the first part of the *Parmenides* he found them all equally unsatisfactory. There is a lesson for Analytic philosophers here: conceptual distinctions serve us well, but when we seek by splitting and refining to reach the core of a concept, we are lost in a maze, because we are asking concepts to do work they were not made for. This is what I sometime described as splitting the husks.

Plato had a long-standing quarrel with the poets and artists; he decried their inconsiderate representation of the immoral, impious, and atrocious deeds ascribed to gods and heroes in the traditional myths. He borrowed the image of objects mimicking ideas and extended it to all things and made it constitute the very nature of art and poetry. This blinded him to his own profound insight into the essence of poetic and artistic creativity. This is truly regrettable. It is as if the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus* on the one hand and Book X of the *Republic* on the other hand were written by two persons of completely opposed mentality and temper-

ament. Socrates would never have gone so wildly astray.

D. R. Khashaba

August 22, 2020

THE METAPHYSICAL QUEST

In the *[Timaeus]* Plato gives the perfect formulation of the ultimate metaphysical question: “What is that which eternally is, which has no origin? And what is that which arises and passes away, but in truth never is?” (27d)) These are not really two questions. It is only when one is fully and lively aware of the mutability and fugitiveness of all things in the world that one is troubled with the question: What then truly is, is in itself and by itself?

Among the earliest Ionian thinkers it was Anaximander who sought not a primal stuff from which all things could be derived but a primal principle (the *apeiron*). This quest for a first principle comes out more clearly with Heraclitus: over and above all flux there is the Logos. With Parmenides the Logos becomes a One that is characterized by total negativity and hence is denied life and activity in spite of

Par,emides's identification of Being with Intelligence (*einai* = *noein*).

Plato sought Reality in the realm of the intelligible, symbolized at its apex (in *Republic* VI) by the Form of the Good, which is unfathomable and ineffable, but which we can see as the fount of all life, all value, all intelligence. This harmonizes with his affirming in the *Sophist* that whatever is real in any sense is no other thing than *dumamis*, power, activity.

Kant had no metaphysics. He showed what metaphysics cannot deliver but failed to show what it can deliver. The moral sphere, the true domain of realities, Kant assigns to Practical Reason which he reduces to a tame theology.

Among all moderns, Schopenhauer is the most clear-sighted metaphysician. The world of flux, Kant's phenomenal world, is representation – I am tempted to say, is what our subjectivity represents to itself as object. The object in itself and by itself cannot sustain itself, cannot be. The *noumenon* that Kant hinted at but dreaded to approach is for Schopenhauer the core of everything and is no other thing than Will.

In my early teens my first metaphysical insight was that Reality must ultimately be Will, and Will,

since it is outgoing and purposive, is Love. This is the insight that I developed into the position that Reality is Creative Eternity, creativity being for me one of four foundational metaphysical principles: Intelligibility, Integrity, Creativity, Transience.

Schopenhauer more than once says that while we know things in the world only as objects, we know our body (all of ourselves, I would say) in two ways, extraneously as object and internally as Will. The least act we do intentionally is willed, is an act of will. Hence we know ourselves phenomenally as objects and also know ourselves noumenally as Will, or in my terminology, as creativity. From this I conclude that all our knowledge, objective as well as subjective, comes from within us. Schopenhauer does not sufficiently emphasize (not to say he overlooks) that our knowledge of the world is a vision we create for ourselves. Thus Schopenhauer's metaphysical pessimism and my metaphysical optimism (soured by the condition of humanity) do not represent philosophical differences but different personal stances.

Whitehead had profound metaphysical insights, chiefly his fundamental insight of reality as process, but he did not integrate those insights into a unified metaphysical vision. He did not raise the metaphysical

question: he subtitled his *Process and Reality* “An Essay in Cosmology”.

**D. R. Khashaba
August 25, 2020**

SHADOW OF A THOUGHT

In thinking we are making ourselves, building our character. It is true that in doing anything we are moulding ourselves, but particularly in thinking we are advancing the ongoing transformation of our character, for good or for ill.

This is a hazy and shabby thought, but there is something in it. We all know that we are all the time making, unmaking, and remaking our body. In a much more significant sense we are all the time, from birth to death, forming our character, our personality. Oscar Wilde's *Picture of Dorian Gray* allegorizes this truth.

Every newborn babe is the project of a human being. How few, how very few, of us attain proper hu-

manhood. The best of us approach the goal in some degree but carry with them scars and dark spots.

Blessed are they who, with their last breath, can think to themselves, *tetelestai.**

D. R. Khashaba

August 27, 2020

***The last utterance of Jesus on the cross according to the Fourth Gospel.**

WISDOM

The Upanishads offer all the wisdom the human soul can enjoy. But (to borrow the language of the Mysteries) they are a closed book to the uninitiated.

Western philosophy sought knowledge. That was the forbidden fruit Adam ate and that distanced him from innocence, the condition of understanding and wisdom.

Hindu sages craved oneness with the One. Only to souls tormented with that craving for oneness with the One do the Upanishads speak.

The soul craving oneness with the One plunges in its own unfathomable depths. And there, and only there, does it have union with the One.

It is only there, in our own unfathomable depth, that we find reality transcending all conditions of finite, transient existence.

In our hurtling after objective knowledge, after the knowledge that is power, we have distanced and continue to distance ourselves from reality, understanding, and wisdom.

“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

D. R. Khhaba

September 1, 2020

SPINOZA

I have always loved and admired Spinoza, not for his system but for his character and his rare insights.

In his *Ethics* Spinoza launches a barrage of conceptual abstractions in which the whole of his metaphysics is as exhaustively contained as the properties of a triangle are contained in the idea of a triangle. All of the ‘geometrical demonstrations’ do no more than unfold the idea of the metaphysical One first introduced in Western philosophy by Parmenides. All of Spinoza’s system is contained in his definition of Substance. All of the astute reasoning is merely the free interplay of ideas in the mind. They are as irrelevant to the world outside us as Kant’s reasoning (against his own better judgment) from the ‘Ideas of Pure Reason’ to the conclusions alleged in the *Critique of Practical Reason*. This shows the fatuity of reasoning in the metaphysical sphere.

Spinoza was not only limited by his special concepts, axioms, and definitions, but was in the first

place limited by his Cartesianism. It is strange how a single thinker can circumscribe and fashion the thought of subsequent generations. The whole of the cleavage between Rationalism and Empiricism in modern philosophy is the outcome of Descartes's vicious bifurcation of the world into the two mutually exclusive substances of thought and extension.

Spinoza though critical of Descartes in other ways, docilely accepts the split of the world into thought and extension, making these two original attributes of God. These being, as for Descartes, non-communicating, Spinoza is constrained to his materialistic-deterministic outlook: he has to say that thought does not move body and body does not move thought. This creates the insurmountable mind-body dilemma that has baffled or befooled modern philosophers.

The problem disappears if we realize that there is no duality in reality. When I take a step my mind does not command my body to move neither does my body impel my mind to have the notion of stepping, but I – the metaphysical I that transcends all actuality – bring about the movement by a creative act. A seed does not split its shell and sprout and flower and bear fruit by an act of God or by materialistic causal necessity but because in its very essence it is an outgoing urge to create, to give, to give birth and to die in the very act of giving birth. This is the dialectic of becoming and

transience in my philosophical vision, giving birth in creative vanishing,

There is no separation of body and mind; the distinction is purely conceptual and is adequately expressed by Schopenhauer in a simple short phrase: no object without subject, no subject without object.

Spinoza's acquiescence in Descartes's duality constrains him to a mechanistic-deterministic account of becoming. This again constrains Spinoza to reduce all conation (if one could speak of conation within a deterministic system) to pleasure and displeasure. Thus for Spinoza: "Love is just pleasure with the accompanying idea of an external cause." This strikes at the root of Spinoza's moral philosophy. Where are we from the love that ascends to the Vision of Beauty, the creative love that outflows with goodness and reality and beauty, the Platonic *tokos en kalōi*! (*Symposium*).

The above are marginal thoughts that ran through my mind while re-reading the *Ethics*. For a more balanced, more sympathetic, account, see Chapter Six of *Quest of Reality* (2013).

D. R. Khashaba

September 5, 2020

Failure of Democracy

I have no knowledge of politics, no experience of politics, and have never had any interest in politics. But humanity is in crisis and I cannot escape being worried. I venture to offer my thoughts for what they are worth. In classical Greece democracy spread an atmosphere congenial to artistic and philosophic creativity but politically the democracy of Athens was as bad as the despotism of Sparta. In our day, the largest modern democracy and the oldest modern democracy are making a mockery of democracy.

However I think that the political problem lies not in the manner of government but in the social system. As long as the social system(s) all over the world are diseased no manner of government will do any good.

If we ever have a sane, healthy, humane society (modeled on a loving, caring family), the problem of government will become purely technical, A board of scientists and experts can then manage rationally. But no such board of scientists and experts can lay down for society its goals, its, end, its values. A government that imposes on society its goals, ends, and values is a theocracy, the worst and most harmful of all tyrannies.

Our ailing societies can have only one cure: to examine their aims, ends, and values, to examine the soul of society, discard false ends and illusory values and adopt sane and humane ends and values. Only a spiritual revolution can save humanity.

Let me end on this hopeful note and not dampen it by saying anything further.

D. R. Khashaba

September 6, 2020

HUMAN LIMITATIONS

It is humbling to note how certain very brilliant minds can misjudge and completely fail to understand others. Yesterday I started writing something on Bertrand Russell's failure to understand, or rather willful refusal to understand Bergson as he had also failed to understand Wittgenstein. In truth Russell's Introduction to the *Tractatus* is a model of self-deception: he brought himself to ascribe to Wittgenstein what he wished his favourite student would have written. After writing two long introductory paragraphs I scrapped the whole thing. I realized that it was futile. An objectively oriented mentality and a subjectively oriented mentality live in and speak of two non-communicating worlds. Thus Bergson, in his criticism of conceptual thinking was trying to do what Whitehead did in re-

vealing the Fallacy of Misplaced Concreteness. I believe that revelation meant nothing to Russell.

A little while ago I have been ‘reading’ Book IX of Plato’s *Laws*. Plato evidently saw slaves as sub-human beings, in no way different from a citizen’s other animate and inanimate possessions. We may say that it was difficult in Plato’s time to see how a civilized state can do away with the institution of slavery, but that does not excuse Plato’s blindness to the humanity of a slave. Plato even prescribes penalties for a rock that ‘kills’ a man whether by falling on the man or by the man falling on the rock. Here we may say that Plato was merely complying with accepted rules of ritual purification in the case of any violent death. But again Plato does not show he was aware of the irrationality involved.

Does not even the Gospels, rightly or wrongly, ascribe to Jesus the irrationality and cruelty of cursing the fig tree and the grosser irrationality and cruelty of sending the ‘legion’ of evil spirits into the pigs, making the pigs down? The point to note is that not only the writers of the Gospels but Christians in general over

more than two millennia have accepted these atrocities without a qualm.

Let us not say, What is all this to us? All of us, the wise and the foolish, the learned and the illiterate, pass judgments that are qualified, if not entirely determined, by inherited beliefs, views, opinions which we do not question except when some dilemma or paradox shocks us and shakes us into awareness.

We, all of us, normally live within a stringently restricted area of awareness. Our only assurance of a fair measure of sanity is to be found in the Socratic insistence on self-examination. We have constantly to examine ourselves and question all our beliefs, presuppositions, evaluations. In all philosophy, the wisest utterance was that of Socrates: An unexamined life is not a life for a human being.

D. R. Khashaba

September 9, 2020

THE METAPHYSICAL PRINCIPLE

I beg the gentle Reader's forbearance for my harping again on the subject of pure metaphysical principle. I feel that the subject bears repetition since the notion is as hard to grasp – even by reason of its utter simplicity – as it is essential for metaphysical understanding.

To think, with the theologians, of the Ultimate as a Necessary Being or a First Being or a Perfect Being is to empty the notion of its metaphysical essence. The Ultimate cannot be a what any more than it can be a this. With Lao Tzu and the Hindu sages we should find it objectionable even to affirm of the Ultimate that it is, for to be is to be determinate, transient, ever vanishing.

Parmenides's One is a bundle of negations. Even the idea of Power is not quite satisfactory for designat-

ing the Ultimate, since we are prone to reify or objectify the Power.

I do not find it acceptable to refer to the metaphysical Ultimate as a Being or, with Spinoza, as Substance, but only as a principle: such was Lao Tzu's *Tao* and Heraclitus's *Logos*. Hence in my writings whenever I describe the Ultimate as 'creative intelligence' I hasten to 'correct' that to 'intelligent creativity'. That is just the point of my naming the Ultimate as Creative Eternity, for eternity is not an entity and is decidedly not extended time or everlasting time but transcends time as it transcends actualized, determinate being. In my first book I spoke of the Ultimate as Act, pure Act.

The metaphysical Act does not act on anything any more than it is the act of a being or agent or power: the Act itself is the reality, the whole of reality.

Hence the difficulty of apprehending the notion; it runs counter to all our habits of thought and speech. Hence mystics when voicing their mystic experience – the experience itself being their own innermost reality – find themselves speaking of Nothingness, of Dark Night, of a Cloud of Unknowing. Let me underline

what might go unnoticed in what I have just said: the mystic's experience is in itself the essence of the mystic's own inner reality.

Thus the Act is pure outgoing, outpouring of reality, beauty, goodness, intelligence. This is an imaginative vision; I readily admit that; but it is the only way I find ultimate Reality (Being) intelligible; moreover, it is a vision that makes it possible for a human being to have a meaningful life.

What I have written above is not what I had in mind when I sat down to write. But the subject is really inexhaustible and I may possibly revert to it again. I will also have to clarify the metaphysical notions of the Whole and of Duration which are confused and obscured by prevalent Empiricist and Rationalist modes of thinking.

D. R. Khashaba

September 11, 2020

PRINCIPLE OF INTELLIGIBILITY

Prefatory

Beside the ultimate metaphysical principle of Creative Eternity my philosophy comprises four basic metaphysical principles: Intelligibility, Integrity, Creativity, and Transience. I have written repeatedly about these, chiefly in *Let Us Philosophize*, *Quest of Reality*, *Creative Eternity*, and *In Praise of Philosophical Ignorance*. But I intend to have another go at them since these four principles sum up the whole of my philosophy.

*

I am convinced that as we can never have an explanation for Being and have to acquiesce in Being as an ul-

timate mystery, we also can have no explanation for intelligence (mind) and have to accept it as an ultimate mystery. In my earliest metaphysical fumblings I saw that ultimately Reality must be good and intelligent.

One of Plato's profoundest insights is that he saw clearly that we can in no way see how it is that we know anything. Plato intimated this negative insight in the myth of Reminiscence: we are born possessed of all knowledge; all that we learn, deduce, infer comes from within us, is born in the mind. Plato does not say this in so many words, but in the *Republic* he says that true education does not put knowledge into the mind but turns the mind's eye inwards. In the *Phaedo*, the *Symposium*, the *Republic*, the philosophic journey begins and ends in the mind, is a pilgrimage within the mind.

Spinoza began a treatise on the Improvement of the Intellect. He abandoned it. Why? My conjecture is that he had to when he found that he could not speak meaningfully of the intellect apart from the whole of Reality; that mind is an original aspect of Being, or in Spinoza's terminology, mind is an attribute of Substance.

Intelligibility then is the self-luminosity of the real. An intelligible idea cannot be apprehended in separation; in itself and by itself it has no quality, hence the impossibility of truly defining an intelligible idea. This is the secret of the Socratic elenchus. (Practically useful definitions are something else.) The intelligible idea can have no meaning simply because it is the meaningfulness of the meaningful. An artist or art critic can speak beautifully for hours about Beauty and never reveal the essence of Beauty. Beauty is the virtue of a beautiful soul that can thereby see beauty in beautiful things. Only a kind soul can see the kindness in a kind deed while impoverished and darkened souls are baffled by the deed and see in it folly or hypocrisy or expediency. That is how witnesses reporting the same event or historians interpreting the same records give widely different accounts. For indeed no understanding is lent us by the world but from within us we weave patterns that lend unity and meaning to the objective presentations of the world. (This is Kant's transcendental philosophy in a nutshell.)

Plato tells us in the *Republic* that only what is wholly real is wholly intelligible. I say: the real and the intelligible are one: the real is its own meaning, its own

meaningfulness, and nothing beside its meaningfulness. At the risk of being tedious I reiterate: the meaningfulness of the real is its reality. It is only thus that I can find Reality intelligible.

The above are stray ramblings. For a possibly more consequential approach, see the books mentioned in the prefatory note above.

D. R. Khashaba

September 13, 2020

PRINCIPLE OF INTEGRITY

The sky is blue,the leaf is green; but we know there is no such thing as blueness or greenness. The pebble is round, but there is no such thing as roundness except in the imagination of a geometrician. The least and the simplest thing in nature is a symphony of interrelated, interacting elements. Yet it is the blueness, the greenness, the roundness that are real – and I do not mean simply ‘real for us’ – as Whitehead insisted in in barring the Fallacy of Misplaced Concreteness. Every one of the interrelated, interacting elements taken by itself is nothing, for it in its turn proves to be a symphony. All we know of reality are wholes made up of wholes within wholes.

Only an integral whole is real and only an integral whole is understandable. Plato tells us that only one who sees things as a whole is philosophical.

A thing absolutely simple is an impossibility. To have being in any sense a thing must be in some way distinct from other things and that is to be qualified. On the other hand a chaotic multiplicity has no meaning. Only what has integral unity can be real and meaningful, for reality and intelligibility are one.

In all walks of life and all spheres of thought we can easily find endless instances of situations that remain perplexing until a previously unobserved element connects the disparate elements giving them unity and meaning. A historian may see a series of happenings or situations as unrelated and all by themselves making no sense until she or he learns of a circumstance that unites the whole series into an intelligible process.

Duration is a profoundly significant exemplification of the principle of wholeness. Of modern philosophers, to my knowledge, only Bergson and Whitehead appreciated the significance of duration. When we speak we do not build up our sentences letter by letter

or syllable by syllable. The elements of a meaningful utterance do not succede one another in temporal sequence but are formed in unitive duration. If in listening to a speaker we received the speech in successive elemental sound units we would not be hearing intelligible speech but a monotonous din.

When Shakespeare wrote: “From fairest creatures we desire increase” that first line of the sonnet was already pregnant with the concluding lines: “Pity the world, or else this glutton be, / To eat the world's due, by the grave and thee”, else that would not have been a fine sonnet and that would not have been Shakespeare.

When we hear even a single sentence spoken, unless our mind retains at least the substance of the beginning, the sentence would convey no meaning to us.

A tune if not apprehended as an integral whole is merely meaningless noise.

Duration is the answer to Zeno’s paradoxes. We do not move and do not act in geometrical space and conceptual time. Physicists and mathematicians reduce all motion and all time to infinitely divisible units of space and infinitely divisible units of time. This is

falsification of reality, though it is practically useful falsification because science can only work with the quantifiable aspect of things and does that through the fictional medium of number. In real life and in the real world motion is not arithmetical progression but is a flow in duration. Scientists err when they take their useful conceptual fictions for reality. Scientists should keep to their calculations and equations and when they are tempted to give interpretations let them call them interpretations and not physical truth.

For two centuries after Newton we lived in a physical world governed by a mysterious force called Gravitation. Came Einstein. No, the motions of bodies in the universe are not governed by gravitation but by the curvature of space. What that curvature means, what space truly is, nobody knows. I am not belittling science; science is great and is doing great work, but when it pretends to explain the world, it is deceiving us.

I am not happy with what I have written above; it is snatchy and disjointed. What I wanted to bring out is this: Wholeness is an original aspect of ultimate Reality and only what comes to us as a whole with integral

**unity can be to us meaningful and understandable and
can be seen by us as real or beautiful or good.**

D. R. Khashaba

September 14, 2020

PRINCIPLE OF CREATIVITY

The notion of ‘cause’ is an empty abstraction. It corresponds to nothing in the natural world. No one thing of itself and by itself can produce a thing different from itself. In all becoming and all process there is a web of interrelated things and circumstances ceaselessly interacting, ceaselessly changing. For practical purposes (including science) we select and abstract a number of elements that may enable us practically to trace and to predict the outcome. But, firstly, no enumeration and detailed description of such elements explains how that outcome comes about. It is only habit and our predilection to practical utility that make us accept the reduction to elements as explanation. Secondly, the prediction is always only an approximation good for our purposes. For all becoming and all process is originaive and comes with nuances and varia-

tions no god could foresee. The mutations underlying biological evolution are only an instance of such nuances and variations. When Heraclitus said that the sun is born anew every day he may have had the naïve belief ascribed to him by scholars but he was yet speaking the truth for the sun that has come up this morning has definitely changed overnight, losing some of its substance and absorbing other matter; and how could a burning, flaming, erupting volcano keep to the same geometrically defined position?

But all of that is, strictly speaking, beside the point. For it is not in the outside world but in ourselves that we have self-evident creativity and freedom. The modern mind, completely enthralled by the abstractions, presuppositions, and fictions of the Empiricist outlook, is blind to the evidence of our every thought, every deed, every bodily movement. When I put forth my hand, take up my cup of coffee, and take a sip of the brown liquid, all of that is spontaneous and free. All that the sophisticated wizardry of neuroscience can do is observe and record concomitant motions in the brain that in themselves and by themselves explain nothing.

The smile of a mother looking at her babe is a spontaneous, free act, creative in the sense that no antecedents determine or explain it.

When Shelley addresses the Skylark saying, “Teach me half the gladness / That thy brain must know”, he is not speaking nonsense, for the singing of the bird is a free outflow of the joy of life that is the essence of the bird’s subjective being.

Are we then always free? We are metaphysically free. Even the vilest of us are free in the sense that in every deed and act they are affirming their proper being. That is the metaphysical truth contorted by the fiction of physical determinism. But morally, alas!, except in our rarest moments, we are in bondage as shown by both Socrates and Spinoza. We human beings, in acquiring conceptual thinking, in separating ourselves from Mother Nature, lost our innocence.* Our concepts, good and bad, govern our behaviour. Only when we know ourselves truly and know our true good are we morally free: thus says Socrates; only when we act in the light of adequate ideas are we free: thus says Spinoza; only under the guidance of moral

maxims are we free: thus says Kant. They are dressing the same truth in different garb.

Back to the natural world: In vain do we seek to understand, to explain, the simplest instance of becoming in terms of scientific principles. Science separates out of the total universal process a chosen part, then reduces the elected process to distinct successive stages and circumstances and calls that explaining the process. But the minutest and most comprehensive description of the bursting of the sprout out of the seed does not make that apparently simple but truly mysterious event intelligible, though scientists, concerned only with utility, think so.

Socrates in the *Phaedo* proposes to investigate the whole question of generation and corruption and concludes that only the intelligible idea of growth can give unity and meaning to the phenomena of a child growing into a man or a seed growing into a tree. Aristotle sought to explain becoming (*Generation and Corruption*) and gave us four abstractions: material cause, formal cause, efficient cause, final cause, none of which is a cause in any significant sense.

Becoming, all becoming, is only understandable as creativity. From the budding of a flower, to a child formulating its first articulate sentence, to a happy maiden bursting into song, to a sonnet by Milton, all is creativity.

D. R. Khashaba

September 16, 2020

***Let me add an allegory:**

When Adam ate of the forbidden fruit of knowledge

A horrifying sentiment darkened his soul;

A pained, bewildered whisper escaped his lips:

“I!”

“What troubles you, dear?”, asked Eve.

“There is a second I in me:

“I am split in twain.”

PRINCIPLE OF TRANSIENCE

Transience is the other side of creativity, the Shiva to the Brahmanic Vishnu. In other words, Transience is an ultimate metaphysical principle, or, in Spinoza's terminology, Transience is an attribute of the Ultimate.

Poets, prophets, and sages have always known that whatever comes to be passes away. To exist is to be vanishing.

A tune to sound must end. A tale to be told must be finished.

All change is originative becoming. When Hydrogen and Oxygen become water, the water has qualities that were neither in the Hydrogen nor in the Oxygen nor in the Hydrogen and the Oxygen mixed together simply as gases.

We live in passing away. Every part of our being is perpetually in process of passing away. It is only in death that we have a semblance of stability and it is mock stability for it is the beginning of falling apart and decay.

Strictly, there is no death in nature. In nature death is change. All things in nature say with Shelley's Cloud,

"I change, but I cannot die."

When an animal dies, the integral unity that is Life, that makes of the multiple parts of the animal an integral whole, is dispersed. It is nomore. The different parts of the body, having lost their integral unity, go their several ways.

When I die, the integral unity of my person is dispersed and is no more. To call that going back to the All or, uniting with the All is poetic myth. Whether it does or does not convey a meaning is a question you may answer to your liking. It conveys nothing to me.

Let me not end on that pathetic note. Human life is a passage through realms of light. I am thankful that I have been blessed with glimpses of that light.

D. R. Khashaba

September 17, 2020

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